

CLAIMS

What is Claimed is:

1. A method for managing virtual properties that exist solely in a virtual form within a computer network and that have no physical counterparts, comprising:

5 maintaining an inventory of said virtual properties accessible by a user via a network connection;

managing ownership of said virtual properties; and

allowing use of said virtual properties by corresponding property owners within corresponding network spaces.

10 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said maintaining step further comprises searching for a desired one of said virtual properties within said inventory.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein said managing step further comprises associating said virtual properties with respective ones of said property owners.

15 4. The method of Claim 1, wherein said managing step further comprises transferring ownership of one of said virtual properties.

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein said transferring step further comprises selling said one of said virtual properties to a customer.

6. The method of Claim 4, wherein said transferring step further comprises trading said one of said virtual properties for another one of said virtual properties.

20 7. The method of Claim 4, wherein said transferring step further comprises winning one of said virtual properties from another property owner in the course of a game.

8. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of coordinating with partners via said network to identify additional virtual properties not included in said inventory.

9. A computer-implemented system for managing virtual properties that exist solely in a virtual form within a computer network and that have no physical counterparts, the system comprising:

a server connected to a network accessible by plural user computers; and
an application program operable with said server to provide the functions

of:

maintaining an inventory of virtual properties via said network connection;

managing ownership of said virtual properties; and

allowing use of said virtual properties by corresponding property owners within corresponding network spaces.

10. The system of Claim 9, further comprising a memory connected to said server and having a database of all said virtual properties maintained by said computer system.

11. The system of Claim 9, wherein said maintaining function further comprises searching for a desired one of said virtual properties within said inventory.

12. The system of Claim 9, wherein said managing function further comprises associating said virtual properties with respective ones of said property owners.

13. The system of Claim 9, wherein said managing function further comprises transferring ownership of one of said virtual properties.

14. The system of Claim 13, wherein said transferring function further comprises selling said one of said virtual properties to a customer.

15. The system of Claim 13, wherein said transferring function further comprises trading said one of said virtual properties for another one of said virtual properties.

16. The system of Claim 13, wherein said transferring function further
5 comprises winning one of said virtual properties from another property owner.

17. The system of Claim 9, further comprising the function of coordinating with partners via said network to identify additional virtual properties not included in said inventory.

LA2:512137.1